



INTRODUCTION TO AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS

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Air mobility operations doctrine represents an accumulation of best practices and lessons learned, from World War II to the most recent conflicts and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations. Air mobility operations support all of the [geographic combatant commanders](#) and [functional combatant commanders](#). The foundational components of air mobility operations—airlift, air refueling, air mobility support, and [aeromedical evacuation](#)—work with other combat forces to achieve national and joint force commander objectives.

Joint doctrine defines air mobility as “the rapid movement of personnel, materiel, and forces to and from or within a theater by air.”¹ The Department of Defense (DOD) transportation mission involves many transportation communities and assets, services, and systems owned by, contracted for, or controlled by the DOD. US Transportation Command serves as the manager of the transportation community and is supported by the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command, the Army’s Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, and the US Navy’s Military Sealift Command.

Mobility air forces (MAF) provide rapid global mobility and conduct air mobility operations.² These forces deliver the global reach and global power necessary to achieve US national objectives. The US military is called upon by national leaders to perform their functions around the globe either directly accomplishing national objectives or supporting other agencies. All Services and US government agencies rely upon Air Force MAF to rapidly move personnel and resources.

“Mobility forces are more than ‘enablers’ and ‘enhancers’ in that they quickly project forces and take the fight to the enemy. As the United States moves into a realm of uncertain adversaries, it is the capability of our mobility forces that will ensure the force projection necessary to protect US national interests.”³ To properly discuss air mobility operations, the Air Force builds on the joint definition to include the support required to conduct air mobility operations.

¹ Joint Publication (JP) 3-17, [Air Mobility Operations](#).

² [JP 3-17](#).

³ USAF 2010 *Rapid Global Mobility Core Function Master Plan*, Version 6, Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB, IL, 2010.